

JIU

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the Human Rights Council of the United Nations, Madame High Commissioner.

It is my privilege to address you today presenting the report prepared by Inspector Papa Louis Fall and myself entitled "Follow-up to the Management Review of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights". This report, which is a follow-up to a previous report of the JIU, was undertaken at the request of the Human Rights Commission, as expressed in its Resolution 2004/73.

The report follows the same structure as the previous one and focuses on reporting back to the Council on the actions taken by the Office of the High Commissioner to implement the ten recommendations of the first report. As is pointed out in the current report, a series of these recommendations have been or are being dealt with to the satisfaction of the Inspectors. However, we are still to be satisfied as to the actions being taken to implement recommendations 7, 8 and 9 - which address the heart of the issue as seen then by both the Commission and the Inspectors - that is to say, the imbalance in the geographic distribution of the staff of the Office.

In fact, as can be seen in table 1 on page 9 of the report, in terms of posts subject to geographic distribution, the situation has deteriorated further since the first report. Regarding Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean, all have had a constant negative trend and a percentage drop in the number of nationals of those regions working in the Office of the High Commissioner between 2002 and 2005. Conversely, the percentages for the region "Western European and Other States" (WEO) has continuously increased from 2003 to 2005. The fact is that in 2005 this region had its nationals encumbering 64.2 % of all professional posts subject to geographic distribution.

Mr. Chairman, if one looks at the total professional posts in the office, by adding posts not subject to geographic distribution, and for proper comparative purpose we exclude national officers (as they were not counted in the earlier report), the "Western European and Other States" (WEO) region's share increased from 59.3 % in 2004 to 61.8 % at the end of 2005 (see table 3b on page 10 of the report).

If we further consider the trend in new recruitments during 2005 (a year after the adoption of Resolution 2004/73), again WEO had a 60.2 % share for a region that has roughly 22 % of the population of all 192 United Nations Member States combined (see table 4 on page 11 of the report).

Lastly, at the most senior level (P-5 and above), as reflected in table 5 on page 11, WEO nationals held 62.5 % of these posts in December 2005.

Mr. Chairman, despite repeated calls to deal with this imbalance by the Human Rights Commission and ECOSOC, and the drafting of strategy by the High Commissioner to redress this situation, the imbalance has continued to deteriorate in the two years that have elapsed between the first JIU report and the one before you today.

We have been able to secure information on recruitment for the period January to September of this year. They show that for that period, 57 % of professional level staff recruited were WEO nationals. While this does show some slight improvement during the current year, it is clear that existing measures are insufficient to deal properly with this problem. There are structural issues that need to be addressed.

We are of the view that the work of the United Nations in the field of Human Rights is at the heart of the reason for the Organization's existence. As stated in the report, the Inspectors concerned believe

that the lack of a geographically balanced Office could result in diminishing the effectiveness of its work, if it is perceived to be culturally biased and unrepresentative of the United Nations and all its membership.

We are convinced that goodwill alone will not be enough to redress this situation. Its root causes must be properly addressed. One aspect that we believe needs to be looked into is the way in which the activities of the Office are financed. The Inspectors believe that the bulk of financing for Human Rights activities should come from core resources.

In the short run, the Inspectors believe that if this situation is to be corrected, Member States must be ready to intervene and support the High Commissioner in order to ensure that the United Nations Secretariat provides the Office with the necessary flexibility to address this problem. In that context some of these measures could be:

- 1) Ensure that national competitive examinations (NCE) in the area of Human Rights are open only to citizens of Member States that are currently underrepresented in the staffing of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights versus for the United Nations as a whole. After all, the competitive examination in this area is designed to fill posts in this particular Office. Such a move would guarantee that at the entry level, the situation would begin to be addressed.
- 2) Reserve a very high percentage (say 90 %) of professional posts at the P-3 to P-5 levels that are to be filled over the next two years, to citizens of countries that are underrepresented within the staffing structure of the Office of the High Commissioner. This measure should apply to both posts financed under the regular budget as well as those financed from extra-budgetary resources.

- 3) Request the Secretary-General to ensure that the necessary flexibility is shown by UN/OHRM so that the aforementioned measures can be implemented with the minimum of delay.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, the Inspectors are convinced that even if this Council and the General Assembly act now to ensure the implementation of these measures, the geographic imbalance in the composition of the staff of the Office will not disappear in a biennium. However, the negative trend of the last decade will have been reversed, and the crucial confidence in the “universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity” of the work of the United Nations in this vital area will undoubtedly be there.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.